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ABSTRACT

A summary of the information contained in the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges' 1978 publication, "The Presidents," is made difficult by the plethora of terms used to identify chief executive officers and by statistical inconsistencies, which included information on only 890 of the 1,200 two-year college heads, presentation of tenure data for only two-thirds of the entries, and the lack of complete information for all entries. However, if one disregards the semantical confusion caused by the use of 28 discrete titles and accepts the assumption that what is presented is representative of college presidents in 1978, the following observations can be made: (1) while presidents ranged in age from 33 to 78 years, their average age was 52; (2) while the sex of some presidents could not be determined by their names, 29 (3%) were obviously women; (3) the highest degree title earned by the greatest number of presidents was the Doctor of Education (held by 46% of the presidents), followed by the Doctor of Philosophy (28.5%), the Master of Arts (11%), and the Master of Education (4%); (4) the length of tenure ranged from less than one year to 44 years and averaged 8.5 years; (5) the presidents were equally divided between those who headed institutions in the same state in which they earned their highest degree and those who did not. Age and tenure data are graphically illustrated in the report. (JP)

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by

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If you think some of the above titles given to our chief executive officers are semantically confusing, consider some of the ways in which additional permutations may be constructed: by associating a geographical unit with the title such as district, area, or campus, which then produces possibilities such as District Chancellor, Area President, or Campus Vice-President; by modifying titles with words such as interim, acting, executive, or academic; by combining principal elements producing such titles as Chancellor/Superintendent, President/Superintendent (and vice versa), President and Academic Dean; or a combination of all of the above, which produces such descriptive titles as Vice-President and Executive Dean, President/Assistant Superintendent, District Superintendent/President, or Chancellor and District Superintendent. If you think this proliferation of possible titles is unrealistic, you may

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be interested in scanning the Presidents Academy and the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges' 1978 publication entitled "The Presidents," in which no fewer than 28 discrete titles are presented, not including those which simply reverse principal elements or indicate temporary appointments.

The publication contains a wealth of interesting information about chief executive officers although there are some inconsistencies in reporting and editing as noted in the preface, and summary information must be gleaned from individual biographical sketches. The publication of three articles in the December-January 1979 issue of the Community and Junior College Journal on how to become or how to select a president is indicative of the level of interest in the personal characteristics as well as the position requirements of the president.

Some of the inconsistencies noted in the 1978 publication include: information on only some 890 of the approximately 1,200 two-year college heads, presentation of tenure data in only two-thirds of the entries, and the lack of complete information on all entries. If one disregards these inconsistencies and accepts the assumption that what is presented is representative of the range and scope of characteristics that exists among chief executive officers in 1978, some rather interesting dimensions and descriptions emerge. In addition to the plethora of terms used above to identify chief executive officers, one can

also look at age (by those so reporting), sex, highest degree earned, period of tenure, and percentage of officers who earned their highest degree in the same state as the institution they now head.

There is a substantial range in age with what might appear to be some very young men who attain the presidency. It is not believable that an individual born in 1967 has headed an institution since 1975 as one entry indicated--that is a little young to be a president! The presidents ranged in age in 1978 from 33 to 73 years. Their average age was about 52 years and the most frequently reported age was 54. Figure 1 below shows the numbers reporting various ages. Approximately 5% of the more complete entries did not include age, while some 11% contained extremely limited descriptions which also excluded age.

A total of 29 entries were obviously from women while some were indeterminant in name, making women approximately 3% of the sample of chief executive officers. The type of highest degree earned by chief executives varied from a reported AA (possibly an editorial error) to the more typical EdD or PhD. The highest degree earned by the greatest number was the EdD (46%); second highest in number was the PhD (28.5%). Some of the other degrees in terms of reported percentages are MA (11%) and MEd (4%). Of all those reporting the highest degree earned (11% did not), one was an associate in arts, 11 bachelors, 172 masters

(21.5%), 1 EdS, and 617 doctorates (77%). Some of the more esoteric degree initials included Th D, JD, LLD, LhD, D Ed, MSEE, MAT, MCS.

The average tenure of the total group reporting tenure (65%) was 8.5 years. This average length of tenure is significantly different from the 4.5 years expected turnover rate for presidents recently predicted in an AACJC Fact Sheet on administration and governance in a two-year college. The tenure range was from less than a year to over 44! Numbers of chief executives by years of tenure are shown in Figure 2. Whether some variance in reporting instructions is responsible for the lower numbers reporting length of tenure or whether those with greater periods of tenure were more likely to offer that information is not known.

The group is nearly equal in numbers of executive officers who head institutions in the same state in which they earned their highest degree as those who did not. Fifty-one percent earned their highest degree in a state other than that in which they serve as a chief executive.

If we consider all the information presented above, the "typical" or "average" chief executive may be described as: male, 52 years of age, with the title of president, who may or may not have earned the highest degree, which is a doctorate, in a state other than that in which he now serves, and who has been at the same institution for 8.5 years. If this description bothers you by its lack of

individuality or by the obvious weaknesses resulting from the inexact data base from which it is derived--take heart, the Presidents Academy and AACJC are going to publish a new version in 1980 and you can try your hand at summarizing that!

FIGURE 1. AGE OF HEAD ADMINISTRATORS

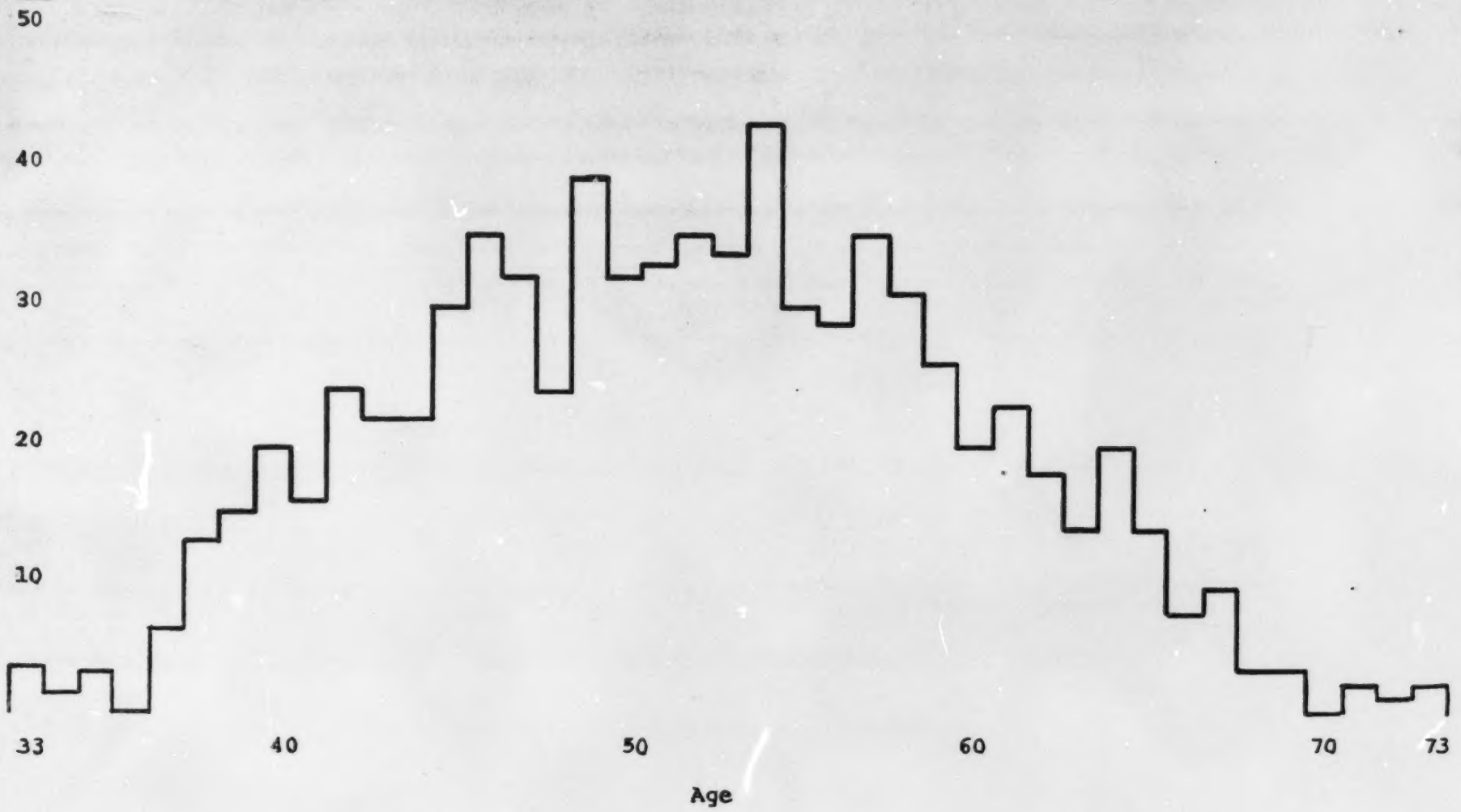
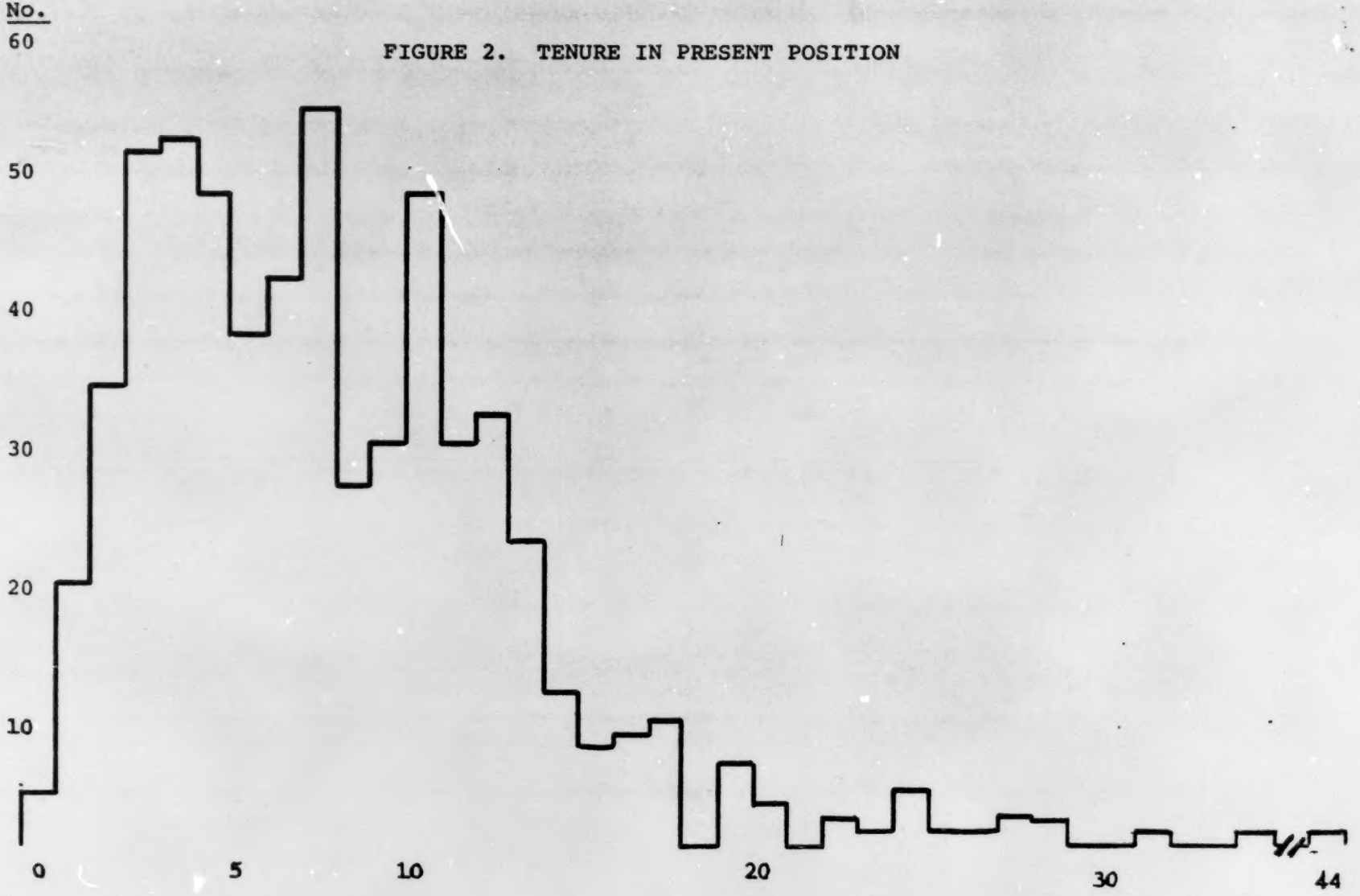


FIGURE 2. TENURE IN PRESENT POSITION



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